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Committee on House Administration
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Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Thanks to our weakness here in Arizona for electing and impeaching colorful governors, our state is often misunderstood by people living in distant parts of the nation. We are, in fact, among the nation's most politically progressive and innovative states. We were born in 1912 in the glory days of the progressive movement, and our constitution is a product of that forward thinking and that idea that citizens should be able to fully participate in the decisions of government.

We have a constitution that enables citizens to create voter initiatives. It is a messy business, but our legislature and governor are always at their best when the people have recourse. The initiative process has given us many of our best governmental improvements, either by direct action or by threat.

Tucson was the second government in the U.S. to create a matching funds program to reduce the cost of campaigning for city office. It has been a model for the nation.

We have some of the nation's most respected laws regarding lobbyist registration, campaign donation disclosure, and limitations on gifts to elected officials. Last fall, we made a brave attempt to take some of the partisanship out of the redistricting process, and we shall see if that was successful as the new independent redistricting commission now begins its work.

Many people in the East were surprised two and a half years ago when Arizona became the second state to pass an innovative campaign finance reform program that provides public campaign funds for candidates who will agree to not raise or spend other funds. Over the next few election cycles, we citizens expect that more and more Arizona legislators will be able to vote without having to worry about the opinions of the few privileged people and industries that now provide the bulk of the campaign cash.

We think this kind of reform needs to spread to all the states and to federal elections. We already have a public financing system for the presidential elections, and all we need to do to make that a good system is to increase the dollars available to the candidates and provide the money only to those who will agree to neither raise nor spend other money.

These are long term approaches. The role of the media in providing sufficient, quality coverage of election campaigns is also a needed and essential reform. As quality coverage of the issues and the candidates improves, the need for campaign cash will decline.

Regarding the fairness and constitutionality of the current version of the McCain-Feingold bill is concerned, let me characterize some of the concerns of the Arizona reform community.

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First, we see it as not going far enough. But it is a good start. There is no question but that it's passage would shift the political landscape in ways that are impossible to predict. This has prompted many --especially those who have mastered the present system of soft money fundraising-- to fear the bill. I understand those fears, but I am one of the many people who look at the flood of special interest money into our campaigns, and look at the deflection of public policy as a result, and conclude that we must take a chance: that it couldn't get much worse. Of course, if it does, we are still alive to change it around again.

The present system has convinced average Americans that their government--their Congressmen--are for sale to the highest bidder. Are they right, or are they wrong? A little of both, surely. What matters is that they believe it, and we must break that belief asunder if they are to be real citizens once more. They must have faith in the system, if the system is to truly be a democratic republic.

The McCain-Feingold bill offers some hope for renewed faith, though it only begins us down a very long road if we are to return to the idea of a nation of, by and for its people.

As to its constitutionality, I remind you that the U.S. Congress is not the Supreme Court. We in Arizona have learned that the business of the three branches of government must be kept apart if they are to function well. Do the right thing for America by passing the bill you think best, then let the court do its job. The fact is, we never, and you never, know what the court thinks--nor do its justices--until a case is before the court. It is then judged according to the needs of its day. Our need today is a strong disinfectant for the national political system, and the court may well agree that the McCain-Feingold approach will serve the purpose with whatever adjustments the court then imposes.

Thank you.